



# THE HALTWHISTLE RINGS



## WALK 19

### ‘The Roman Wall – Before, During and After’

**Length:** 7.5 mls/12.2 km

**Grade:** 2 Moderate

**Ascent/descent:** 1040 ft/ 317m

**OS explorer OL 43** Hadrian’s Wall

**Start Point:** By car, bus,

**For bus timetable:** for AD122: [www.gonortheast.co.uk](http://www.gonortheast.co.uk)


An outstandingly scenic walk along the Wall to Crag Lough, down to visit Vindolanda, through rolling fields and up to the highest point of the Wall at Winshields.

**Start Point:** By Car, Bus

**Start:** The Sill, Once Brewed

**Bus users:** Stop at The Sill


**Car users:** From Haltwhistle town centre take Main Street east. At the bottom of the hill turn left up the road for 1ml/1km to reach the B6318, next to the Milecastle Inn. Turn right along the road for 3 mls/5 km, following the signs to The Sill at Once Brewed. ([The Sill • The UK’s National Landscape Discovery Centre](#)) Turn right at the crossroads, and right again into the car park. The parking charge, which includes access to the Centre, is payable on departure. Facilities include exhibitions, shop, café, and toilets. (GR: NY752669)

1. Follow the footpath around the building to the road.  Cross the road - WITH CARE - and take the footpath opposite up towards Hadrian’s Wall alongside the road.

#### Did you know?

*The Sill’s address is Once Brewed, and it includes both a National Park Centre and a Youth Hostel. The Twice Brewed Inn and Brew House lie adjacent to the west, and this is one of the stories about the origin of its name. After the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, the English commissioned a road to be built from Newcastle to Carlisle in case the rebellious Scots again tried to invade down an unprotected west coast. A General Wade was given the task and, where he could, he followed the line of the Wall and used much of it as hard-core. His men were thirsty and to their dismay the beer was very weak. They demanded that it be brewed for a second time; and the pub became known as the ‘Twice Brewed’.*

*Many years later in 1934, the Youth Hostel Association (England and Wales), generously supported by Charles Trevelyan of Wallington Hall, converted a farmhouse into one of the first youth hostels. His wife Lady Caroline Trevelyan, a keen teetotaler, opened the hostel, and in her address, she insisted that the only beverage consumed here would-be tea, and that would be brewed only once.*

 Where the footpath finishes, cross the road - WITH CARE- through a wicket gate and bear left uphill, following the sign for Hadrian's Wall Path. At the second wicket gate, turn right alongside Hadrian's Wall. Descend and then climb up onto Peel Crags. (GR: NY753675)

**Did you know?**

*The Roman's believed in domination. 'Join us and be a Roman or be annihilated' seemed to be the choice! Hadrian's biographer tells us that, 'He was the first to build a wall, 80 miles long, to separate the Romans from the barbarians.' So why a Wall? It was likely to be a combination of factors. Could it simply be about military and economic control? No-one could pass through the gates in the milecastles unnoticed or remain armed in the military zone they created. Similarly, no trade could take place without the customs men taking their share for the Emperor. Was it largely about power and legacy? Perhaps it was also time to consolidate and recognise the economic problems that may arise from expansion? Theories abound but it is likely to be a combination of factors. It is easy to see why Hadrian chose this dramatic ridge of hard volcanic rock for his Frontier. The rock was here for some 295 million years before the Romans arrived. Civilisations may come and go but rock remains.*

2.The path turns left through a wicket gate as you continue along the Trail before eventually dipping down to Castle Nick and on to reach Sycamore Gap. (GR: NY762678)



**Did You Know?**

*The sharp clefts in the whinstone at both Castle Nick and Sycamore Gap were created by glacial melt water. The Romans developed a system of defensive milecastles, and intervening stone turrets, to guard these natural gateways, with causeways across the Wall ditch to the north. Housing a garrison of perhaps 20–30 auxiliary soldiers, they also acted as a custom post levying taxation on people, goods and livestock crossing the frontier. Standing in a dramatic dip, the Sycamore Gap tree starred in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves', and is one of the most photographed in the country. In 2016 it also took the crown for 'English Tree of the Year' in the Woodland Trust's awards.*

Turn left through the Wall and follow the pitched path up to your right. passing to reach the top of Highshield Crags with Crag Lough far below. **BEWARE:** The path runs close to the edge of the crags here - TAKE CARE.

**Did You Know?**

*Crag Lough was created when glacial ice scoured out shallow depressions which filled with meltwater. The shallow water provides a haven for wild fowl and wading birds. Look out too for the Mute Swans which can often be seen.*

3.Descend through woodland to the farm track from Hotbank Farm. Turn right onto this (signposted, 'Roman Military Way') and continue down to the road.  At the road -TAKE CARE- turn right and in 300 yards/274 m take the signposted path on your left. (GR: NY771674)  Cross the road - WITH CARE - to go diagonally right across a field, aiming for the left of the buildings at High Shield. Cross the stile and follow the path with the field boundary on your left. Cross a ladder stile and descend through fields, initially towards a group of Scots Pines ahead, and then bear right down to a gate on the road. You will turn right here and follow the road past the farm and the north wall of Vindolanda Roman Fort.

**Did You Know?**


*There is a Roman milestone on your right just before the gate at the road. This was on the Stanegate which was built as the Roman Army pushed north around AD 60-84, and so predates the building of Hadrian's Wall. It ran from the Roman fort of Corstopitum at Corbridge in the east, to the Roman fort of Luguvalium at Carlisle in the west and is different to most Roman roads as it follows the easiest gradients. The Romans' name for this road is lost to us and we know it by its old English name meaning of 'stone'. Vindolanda, dates from 85 AD and was an important garrison base on the Stanegate, both prior to and during construction of the Wall. Excavations show that it was a Fort in its own right, and even after the Roman army occupation was abandoned, it remained in use for a further 400 years. Excavations are on-going and have revealed many fascinating insights. A visit is well worthwhile. Admission charges apply.*

4. Pass the car park on your left and take the footpath through the gate on your left, signposted 'Henshaw & Bardon Mill'. (GR: NY766664) Continue through another five-bar-gate along a stony track. With a stone wall on your left, descend to a stile on your right, 20 yds/18 m before the junction with another farm track from the left. Go over the stile and straight on across rough pasture to a copse of thorn and birch trees, behind which you will find a stile. Cross the stile and Kingcain Burn and ascend the field to the left of the building ahead, Kit's Shield. BEWARE: Take care at this section due to erosion and fallen trees. Go over the stile and descend into the gully of Bean Burn. (GR: NY764659) Climb the well-worn path up the other side of the gully, with a ditch and fence on your left, and cross the stile ahead. Go straight on with the field boundary on your left and over a stile into a tree plantation. Exit over a ladder stile and bear right around Layside Farm. Walk up the narrow field adjacent to Layside and exit the field near to the field top. Cross the stile and turn down the farm track to the road.

**Did You Know?**

*There is an excellent view of Hadrian's Wall and Sycamore Gap on your right as you pass beside the farmhouse.*

5. Cross the road, turn left for 22 yds/20 m and then right over a ladder stile signposted 'Military Road'. Do not take the track to Cranberry Brow. Go diagonally right across the field to cross a stile beside a telegraph pole. Aim for the house (called Seatsides) on the top of the rise before descending to the left of the building to a stile. Cross the stile and go diagonally right up the field, now to the left of the house, and go over a ladder stile by a five-bar gate. (GR: NY750662) Go diagonally left down across the field, aiming for the farm buildings ahead, to cross another ladder stile. From here, go diagonally right over another ladder stile, visible ahead, and down towards Waterhead Farm. Aim for the right of the farm, go over a stile on a fence, diagonally left across a small paddock to exit through a kissing gate. Turn left and almost immediately right onto the farm track to reach the road opposite Winshields Farm and camping site. (GR: NY745667)

6.  Cross the road - WITH CARE - and turn left for 20 yds/18 m, then right onto the footpath sign posted 'Hadrian's Wall'. Cross the stile, pass the farm on your right, through a five-bar-gate and continue up this track towards Winshields Crag. The track bends left and then right as you near the top - to meet the Wall ahead of you. Turn right onto Hadrian's Wall National Trail and up to the summit of Winshields Crag. (GR: NY742676)

**Did you know?**

*Winshields marks both the halfway point and the highest position on Hadrian's Wall. The views in every direction tell the story of human activity. The end of the Ice Age left a landscape of bare rock, ice pockets and loughs (lakes). Mosses, lichens and alpine plants slowly colonized, and by 6000 BC the region was covered by a dense natural forest of oak, alder, birch and elm. Neolithic man began to make room to grow crops and graze sheep and cattle. Numbers increased over the centuries and as the climate became wetter and cooler the upland became moorland where the trees could not regain their foothold. Livestock farming of sheep and cattle continues today.*

Continue along the line of the Wall, through several field boundaries, to descend over a stone stile onto the road. From here, turn right and then follow the road and footpath back down to The Sill.